School for Housewives

by Marion Harland

THE conviction borne in upon the minds of intelligent people of all classes that we Americans eat too much meat has led naturally to a search for substitutes for flesh food. In the course of this quest vegetarianism has come to the front in great strength. The resolution not to support life by eating that which must give up its life as a sacrifice to the appetites or needs of man has been formulated into a creed. It is no part of our work today to discuss this branch of dietetics as a moral principle. What may be called a ramification of this cardinal principle is the nut fad, warmly supported, as might be expected, by the advocates of pure vegetarianism, and almost as strongly by certain writers and lecturers upon food values. In a certain restaurant in New York city, from which all animal food is rigorously excluded, I sat down, a while ago, to a six-course luncheon, in which "Protese" appeared four times. Analysis of the quartet of dishes showed that nuts, ground or beaten to a paste, were the "subject matter" of the food with the, to me, unfamiliar name.

By way of clearing decks for action, let me say that, in my humble opinion, there is no one article of food or class of foods which is digestible by every human stomach. Even milk, pronounced by common consent to be the most nearly perfect food, disagrees actively with some people. It engenders bile, causes heartburn, and refuses to be assimilated by the gastric juices. It is equally true that nuts are not wholesome for everybody. They cause distressing flatulence in some otherwise healthy systems, and tend to constipation, while the oils which enter largely into their composition are provocative of pimples and other eruptions. There is hardly one person in ten who can digest easily raw nuts. Even the boys to whom autumn brings, as one of its choicest pleasures, the nutting frolic, have more fun in gathering chestnuts than in eating them. There is no such thing as an out-of-doors nut cure. In France, Italy, and Spain, where chestnuts form a large proportion of the food of the peasantry, they are roasted, boiled, or stewed before they are eaten. At every street corner of the Italian town one sees huge, cheese-like cakes of steaming "Polenta" for sale all winter long. The gamin—whose supper and breakfast consist of a huge wedge of this, bought with a few centimes and eaten from the palm of his dirty hand—would never think of devouring raw chestnuts. "Polenta," his staff of life, is ground chestnuts kneaded into a dough and boiled.

One writer upon dietetics says that raw nuts should never be eaten except with salt, or in conjunction with fruits. Instinctive obedience to this natural law associates nuts and raisins, walnuts and wine, as naturally as hock and eye, or shovel and tongs. The heavy nut oils demand a corrective in the form of acid or alkali. Children who are allowed to eat freely of chestnuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, etc., should be instructed to qualify these with salt, sugar, or fruit. Children and adults should alike bear in mind that nuts, in order to be tolerably digestible, must be thoroughly masticated. Says a writer upon practical dietetics: "Nuts are a very rich food, containing much oil in such a state that it is not easily acted upon by the gastric juices unless minutely divided before being passed on to the stomach." That is, they should be well chewed, pounded, or chopped.

Granting all this, it is yet true that the housemother who is not acquainted with the value of nuts as nutritive and palatable food loses excellent opportunities for varying her autumnal and winter bills of fare. The recipes given herewith may enlighten her in this respect.

The chestnuts generally used in cookery are the large so-called "Spanish" variety. They can be bought in market or grocery. It is possible, however, to use the smaller American chestnut in each of the recipes offered. The only objection to the smaller nut is the increased trouble of shelling and skinning, since so many more must be used to get enough for a dish.

Savory Stew of Chestnuts.

Boil the chestnuts for fifteen minutes, throw into cold water to facilitate shelling and skinning. Remove every bit of the skin, which is bitter when cooked. Put into a saucepan and cover with gravy left from roast chicken or other poultry. If giblet gravy is used, thin and strain it before pouring over the chestnuts. Stew gently fifteen minutes and serve in the gravy. This is a delicious accompaniment to roast poultry.

Chestnut Souffle.

Boil and skin enough chestnuts to make a cupful when rubbed through a colander or vegetable press. Beat four eggs light, stir the chestnuts into the yolks, add a tablespoonful of melted butter and two tablespoonfuls of fine cracker dust, two cupfuls of milk, a tablespoonful of sugar; salt and pepper to taste; lastly, the frothed whites. Bake, covered, in a buttered pudding dish for half an hour, uncover, brown, and serve before it falls. Eat with meat.

Chestnut and Sweet Potato Croquettes.

Boil and mash enough sweet potatoes to make two cupfuls and enough Spanish chestnuts to make one cupful. Rub the nuts and potatoes together while hot and beat into them two tablespoonfuls of butter, four teaspoonfuls of cream, two beaten eggs and season to taste. When cold, form into croquettes, roll in egg and cracker crumbs and set in a cold place for an hour before frying in deep, boiling fat.

Chestnut Croquettes—Plain.

Shell and boil two cupfuls of large chestnuts, skin and rub through a colander. Work into them a tablespoonful of butter, a little salt, a few drops of lemon juice, and a dash of paprika. Turn into a double boiler and make very hot; then set aside to cool. When cold, form into small croquettes, roll in egg, then in cracker crumbs and set in the ice for an hour before frying in deep, boiling fat. Peanut croquettes may be made in the same way.

Chestnut Stuffing for Turkey.

Boil one quart of chestnuts, shell and peel them. Mash smooth and rub into them two tablespoonfuls of butter; salt and white pepper to taste. Stuff the turkey with this as you would with any other kind of dressing.

A Chestnut Charlotte.

Boil and shell chestnuts, remove the skins and rub the nuts through a colander. Sweeten to taste and beat to a soft paste with a little cream. Form the mixture into a pyramid in the center of a chilled platter and heap sweetened whipped cream about it.

MARION HARLAND.

AROUND THE COUNCIL TABLE WITH MARION HARLAND

PART of "A Virginian's" sensible letter, for which we could not make room last week, will be found below. What she has to say is the more valuable because so many of our honorable selves are obliged, like our brave writer, to practice a wise economy.

"I have to economize in many ways, and I think I shall first tell you all how I make soup. Meat is very dear here. So, occasionally we get two pounds of porterhouse steak, take the bones and trimmings—all that wouldn't be good when cooked as steak—put on in cold water and cook slowly while we prepare and eat breakfast and do the morning's work. Then we skim and strain, and I have enough stock for any kind of soup I wish. Sometimes I just boil a cupful of rice until tender, and pour rice water and all into the stock; season with salt and pepper and serve with crackers. Sometimes I make drop dumplings for it; at others I add an onion or two and a cup of tomatoes and a few potatoes.

"I should like to write and hear of different methods of washing and ironing.

"Also of the care and training of children. Will you please tell me what you would do when children get to fussing and doing some little thing to tease and annoy the other children, or when they are to be dressed in the afternoon, just for home, they never want to put on what I think most suitable, and often cry until it is past bearing, to have their own way? I try to study them and manage them in a gentle manner, but have failed to find a way sometimes.

"A VIRGINIAN."

After reading the latter part of your letter "I fell a thinking," as old John Bunyan says. I will give you kindly and briefly some of the results of my cogitation. Long before a child can put into words her preference for one gown above another, she should have been taught, in all its length and breadth and entirety, the child's rule of faith and practice—"MOTHER KNOWS BEST." If rightly learned, this multum in parvo will—not put an end to all controversy—but put the beginning of controversy out of the question. It may not be true that babies go astray as soon as they are born. It is solemnly true that their education in obedience must be begun by the time their eyes are fairly opened upon a world where obedience to right laws means happiness, and disobedience misery. We mothers know that a child can be trained into regular habits of eating and sleeping and lying quietly awake in bed or crib, before it is two months old. It can also be taught the meaning of the mother's "No!" as expressed in tone or look, long before it is a year old. You have lost much time, but begin at once to drill your little ones into submission to the brief, strong code I wrote out for you just now. Belief in this, and action upon that belief, would soon abate the nuisance of bickering and teasing one another. It should be enough for them to know that the practice is offensive to you, and that you mean to put a stop to it.

Will you ask through your column one of "the family" to tell more of how to pack eggs for winter use? I would like to use the recipe while eggs are low in price. My grandmother had a way of putting them down in slaked lime, and they kept well, too, but how she did it is more than I can tell. Then there is a way of keeping them by greasing them all over with lard or butter or tallow to coat the porous shell, and then pack them in oats. Whether or not this would work successfully I do not know.

INEXPERIENCE (Buffalo, N. Y.)

Each and every one of the methods you name has been recommended by correspondents. I think, however, the process to which you refer is the preservation of eggs by coating them with a sort of glaze made by a solution of silicate of soda. I asked last week for a more exact description of this method from the contributor who advised it. The main object of each of these methods is to exclude the air from the inside of the egg. This may be done by dipping it for a moment in melted paraffin.

If "Mrs. H. P. L., Waltham, Mass.," and others will use corrosive sublimate in the following way they will no longer be annoyed by the unwelcome visitors—bedbugs, ants, and other pests.

Take a cake of white soap or a piece of tallow, and with a knife scrape as much as needed, then add an ounce of powdered corrosive sublimate, making a smooth paste. After washing the bedstead with cold salt water, wipe dry and apply the paste to every crevice. This will not evaporate or soak into the wood as liquids do, but will prove a ready and deadly feast for all partakers. For ants I spread a strip of muslin an inch wide with the paste and tack it around the legs, or under the cupboards, or lay them on the lower shelf under the papers. I put this on after fall house cleaning, and it stays there until spring, when it is all scraped off, the shelves are washed and the paste is renewed. There are no bugs in my house.

Mrs. E. M. D. (Ohio).

Will the sufferers from the "pests" common to hundreds of well-ordered households "in the good old summer time" make careful note of the foregoing, and, until they have tested it fairly, refrain from crucifying my sensibilities and boring really "Constant Readers" by begging me to publish ways and means of ridding houses and flats of the detestable intruders? There is no room here for fear of explosions and of poisons left in the way of children and domestic animals.

TWO GOOD RICE RECIPES RECOMMENDED BY A CONTRIBUTOR

The following proved recipes may aid some reader of your valuable department:

No. 1—To Boil Rice.

Have ready a kettle containing three or four quarts of well-salted boiling water. It must be boiling briskly and be kept so for twenty minutes. Wash and drain a large cup of rice and inclose in a thin muslin bag about seven inches wide by twelve long. Tie securely near the open end and drop into the boiling water. Lift occasionally to see that it does not stick, and turn once. In twenty minutes the rice will be perfectly cooked, whole, mealy, delicious.

Run cold water over the bag, wring gently, open, and turn out, if necessary, drying a few minutes in the oven; but practice will enable you to turn it out dry without this.

The water is fine for setting bread, used same as potato water.

No. 2—Cold Boiled Rice Recipes.

With the hands mix into a pint of cold boiled rice one whole beaten egg, or the yolk from your coffee egg. Mold into thin round patties to dip in flour and fry in hot drippings (not too hard) until a golden brown. Or prepare in the same way but omitting the flour; put into a well-greased baking pan; spread a little butter on top, and bake to a golden brown.

I often mix cold rice with milk, sugar and nutmeg to taste, and bake. If plenty of milk is used the pudding will have its own sauce.

HOW TO CLEAN KNIT GOODS

THERE'S a way of knitting and crocheting baby sacques and afghans so that they are easily washed. All those that are firm to the touch can be kept in shape with only ordinary care; while the loosely-put-together types stretch hopelessly out of shape by the weight of the water.

Sacques with tightly knit yokes—the body of the sacque pulled on, and the full sleeves brought into as tightly knit cuffs—can be washed and washed, in soapy water, pulled into shape while they are wet, and laid on a clean towel to dry. They can even be hung up, if they are carefully pinned on the line—not with clothespins, which are bound to stretch them, but with long white pins, deftly run through the yoke.

Dry cleaning should only be applied where washing is impossible; with most of us the feeling that goes with knowing that a thing has been washed has as much to do with its cleanliness as the actual getting rid of soil.

To dry clean, rub finely powdered starch or French chalk well into sacque or afghan, piling it on and rubbing as much of it in as you possibly can. Wrap it up in a clean, white cloth, and let it lie for a few days, then bring it out and gently beat the starch out of it. The dirt will come out with the starch.

Washing with gasolene or naphtha will do the work more quickly than either of the other ways, but it never seems the way to have anything cleaned that is to be used about little babies. Washing with soap and water is not much more likely to stretch the sacque than gasolene. If you do use gasolene, use that which has been deodorized—there's all the difference in the world between it and the other kind.

And, by the way, use soap jelly to make your suds of, rather than rub the soap directly on the piece. Soap jelly is just odds and ends of pure soap put in a saucepan on the back of the stove with water enough to cover them, allowed to cook slowly into a jelly and then put into a bottle for just such use and for washing laces.

USEFUL SEWING ROOM HINTS

A good idea for home dressmakers who find a trouble in fitting themselves is to buy 1½ yards of strong lining and cut out a perfectly fitting bodice pattern to come five or six inches below the waist line. Bone and stitch it as if for an ordinary dress. Instead of hooks and eyes sew together down the front, then stuff the lining firmly with sawdust, shaping it as you proceed. Sew a strong lining across the bottom, so as to stand on a table; add a stock collar at neck, with a piece of lining across the top. This model is most useful for draping and trimming blouses, also for fitting collars and yokes.

When sewing black cotton materials, such as Italian cloth, sateen and black prints, always use silk, as the black sewing cotton turns rusty with wear and washing, and spoils the appearance of the articles on which it is used.

If in sewing on hooks, especially down the front of a bodice, they are buttonholed on, they will become firm with half the number of stitches otherwise required, and will not become loosened nearly as quickly.

When machining a thin material, such as chiffon, place a piece of paper underneath the material. It will prevent it puckering, and can be easily removed afterward.

When joining a bias piece of material to a straight piece, always keep the bias piece underneath, as this prevents it from stretching.

When sewing on buttons, before you lay the button on the garment put the thread through so that the knot will be on the right side. That leaves it under the button and prevents it from being ironed or worn away, and thus beginning the loosening process. Before you begin sewing, lay a large pin across the button, so that the threads go over the pin. After you have finished filling the holes, draw out the pin, and wind the thread round and round beneath the button. This makes a stem to sustain the pulling and wear of the buttonhole.

Always thread your needle before cutting the cotton to insure threading the right end; otherwise it will tangle. Cut your cotton; do not bite or break it. Use the right size needle and suitable cotton for your material. See that your thread is firmly and neatly fastened off.

Buttonholes on shirts should be stitched round with strong cotton just outside the buttonhole stitch while they are new. If this is done, they will last almost as long as the shirt itself without tearing away.

To avoid marking velvet when sewing it, lay another piece face downward to rest your fingers on, and you will find when you have finished sewing that the pile will not be flattened.

Half-worn sheets should be cut in half lengthways, the selvedges seamed together, and the newly cut edges hemmed. This considerably lengthens their lease of life.

SUBSTITUTE FOR THE HORSE.

A few years ago a certain stock company was making a circuit of New England, and their itinerary included Dover, N. H. They were in that city a week, and one evening put on "Richard III."

Harry Bowen was playing the piece for the first time and when he came to the lines, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" some wag in the gallery shouted, "Wouldn't an ass suit you?"

"Yes," responded Bowen, quickly, "please come round to the stage door."

The tragedian was not interrupted again and his quick wit so pleased the manager that he played a leading part during the rest of the season.—Boston Herald.